



LETTER

Viva Delay

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Received: 8 May 2016 / Accepted: 21 May 2016 / Published online: 28 June 2016
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Abstract The time delay between submission of a thesis and Viva Voce is intolerable for students. This letter tries to draw the readers' attention to the effect of choosing the right examiner, in order to reduce the Viva Voce delay.

Keywords Viva Voce · Graduation delay · Examiner · Study pressures

Letter to the Editor

Examination submission day is an unforgettable day for all students; there is a mixture of joy and relief when their thesis is finally handed over to their supervisor(s)/university for final evaluation and Viva Voce. However, students soon realise that thesis submission is not the final stage. In addition to a study by Ngozi and Oluwatayo (2013) that examined causes for delay in thesis completion, this letter highlights the fact that graduation depends entirely on the Viva. Any Viva delay is also a source of graduation delay. In some cases, thesis submission is the commencement of a new and predominantly anxious episode.

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Viva Voce, or briefly Viva, refers to the postgraduates' final assessment, which normally has several examiners (Bode et al. 2011). There are two different Viva outcomes, pass (with or without corrections) and fail. There is usually a significant length of time between thesis submission and Viva date. Although it can take from 1 month to more than 1 year, 2 months is expected to be the average in most universities. This time is hugely dependent on the supervisor(s) approving the thesis report for Viva, the supervisor(s)/university nominating the examiners and sending the thesis report for evaluation examiners commitment to accepting, reading and commenting on the thesis; the postgraduate unit for scheduling the Viva date and availability of examiners to attend the oral Viva session; and availability of examiners checking and approving corrections to the thesis report made by the submitting students based on the comments given on the Viva date.

Having the right examiners can be crucial for rapid graduation. The authors' experience reveals that choosing an examiner with a busy schedule often results in a delay of the Viva date. However, sometimes, unprofessional examiners contribute to the Viva delay: marking scripts in a spare moment just before (or even during) the Viva session surely does not result in an accurate and valid evaluation. Some supervisors nominate examiners with less expertise in the thesis field. These examiners therefore have time to read and have a faster schedule for the Viva.

Academic reputation and/or payment for being a Viva examiner might be one of the main results for examiners accepting a thesis report to evaluate. However, it is unethical to accept a new review task, when there is little time available or when the research report is not in the examiner's area of expertise. Examiners are advised to not accept Viva invitations or appointments as a Viva examiner if they cannot complete a proper review in a reasonable time. This is similar to the unethical supervision phenomenon (Yahaghi et al. 2016). Viva delay may change a student's life. Avoiding Viva delay could help students reduce the stress experienced between submission and Viva exam, and thus shorten their graduation time.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest None.

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